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especially in Jesus's mind at this time, either because of the special trial that was soon to come upon him while his faith was especially weak,⁹ or that, should he pass safely through this temptation, he might, as the recognized head of the band, rally them to the service of their risen Lord. The special purpose of this prayer was that Peter's faith might not fail. Was this prayer answered? If one confines the temptation of Peter to the scene in the High Priest's house, the scene of the three or more denials, then the answer must be in the negative. But that was far from being the strongest temptation to which Peter was subjected. The testing time was *after* his denial. The question was, Could he ever get back again to former ground? Satan had him in his power after the fall more than before. Would Peter be able to escape? The disappearance of Peter from the scene of the later trial and crucifixion of Jesus is very significant in this connection. His faith did triumph over this second and deeper temptation. He is seen among the first disciples at the tomb of the risen Saviour. And in this sense the prayer of Jesus was answered. Satan had asked for them all. In a sense he overcame them all. But not in the sense in which he was to overcome Peter. It was not the tempted Peter for whom Jesus prayed, so much as for the fallen Peter. It was that he might rise after he had fallen, not that he might not fall. It was that when he had been entrapped his faith might not desert him. It was that when he had started out on the path along which he as well as Judas ran, he might not like Judas pursue it to the end, but he might turn about (cf. A. V. "converted;" R. V. "turned again") and seek the Lord again. Which thing, indeed, he did, and became the "Under-Shepherd," to whom the Lord gave the tender and searching admonitions of John 21. A second interesting case of the interchange of pronouns is in John 1:50, 51. Here Jesus has been revealing his divine insight to Nathaniel and to the latter's wondering exclamation and confession, he replies, "*Thou* shalt see greater things than these." And the Evangelist adds, "He saith unto *him* . . . I say unto *you* (plural), *ye* shall see the heaven opened," etc. The evident mysteriousness of the reply makes it all the more interesting. Why should he have addressed to Nathaniel alone what seems to be a general statement to all of the first disciples? Or, can the plural "you" addressed to Nathaniel be interpreted to mean "such as you," i. e., Nathaniel is first told that he will see something far surpassing this exhibition of Jesus's insight. yea, that he, *and such as he* who had so quickly recognized Jesus as Messiah, who had such receptivity for the Truth, would be given to see what was far more glorious, the presence and blessing of God, the communion of the Father with the Son of Man. Such open-hearted believers in Jesus as the King of Israel would come to know Him as God manifest in the flesh, Son of God because "son of man."

G.

The Gospels and the Early Church. The primary purpose of the Gospels was to tell Christians about Christ, and their immense value to the church consists in their fulfillment of this purpose. But there is also another useful purpose which they serve in a sphere in which their usefulness is generally overlooked. We refer to the indirect testimony contained in them to the life and teachings of the primitive church. A distinction must be made between the subject of the Gospel history and the writers of it. The former did His work and passed away from earthly vision before these Gospels were committed to writing. A generation intervened, indeed, between the time of Jesus

and the appearance of the Third Gospel. Perhaps the earliest Gospel was given to the church in written form forty years after the Crucifixion. In the case of the Fourth, half a century and more separates it from our Lord. During these years the primitive believers, among whom were the writers of these Gospels, lived a life which is absolutely unparalleled in the variety, depth and power of its inward and outward activities. This stirring spiritual life, filled with light and color, with progress in doctrine and expansion in the earth, with controversy and reconciliation, has left its traces in the records of the life and writings of the apostle to the Gentiles. But have the writers of the Gospels, who were a part of this life, permitted no impressions of it to appear in their writings? That would be impossible, since these Gospels were intended to reach and be read by the church of that day, and hence must be bathed in the spiritual and doctrinal atmosphere of the Christian world of the time. Hence the student is justified in making a careful study of the four Gospels with this point ever before his mind: What is the testimony of these writings to the life and thought of the Church in the first century? Indeed, the thorough student is not justified in neglecting this rich field. The many gaps in our present knowledge of these times is, in no small part, due to the neglect of a source which, in these Gospels, has lain before students almost from the beginning.

A pictorial illustration of what we mean is given in the excellent chart provided for the readers of the *STUDENT* by Mr. C. W. Votaw in his "Inductive Studies on the Founding of the Christian Church" (see January number p. 33). Toward the bottom of this chart is a vacant space in which these words stand, "Many hold that the Synoptic Gospels were written, or received their present form during these ten years." (i. e. circ. 70-80 A. D.) If this is the case, then how invaluable to us are the hints which these Gospels contain with respect to the activity of life and thought during this decade otherwise unknown—a period in which every year in the fulness of its life must have been equal to five years of ordinary existence. And even while we are not inclined to agree with the "many" referred to above, but would place Matthew and Mark somewhat earlier, leaving Luke to witness to the life and spirit of this decade, we do not minimize but rather emphasize by this distribution of the material over several periods the value of its testimony. It may be mentioned, in passing, that all this material is omitted in the treatment of the first century of the church in Mr. Votaw's otherwise most valuable outlines that immediately follow the chart. Perhaps the methods and results of such an inquiry were regarded by him as somewhat too remote for the average student, but we cannot help wishing that some hints had been given there to guide the more thorough student in drawing from the Gospels their contribution to this history. That the subject is not to be neglected, however, is seen by reference to the scheme he sets forth in the *STUDENT* for Dec. 1891, p. 353, where we read under section 42 (p. 357) "Contributions to the History of this Period Made by the Four Gospels" etc. We shall look with interest for the discussion of this subject by Mr. Votaw.

But, to come to more particular illustration of the method of such an investigation and its results, we may summarize these in the most general way. To go into detail, indeed, is the only satisfactory thing to do, since the most important results must come from close study of chapters, and particular incidents, verses and even words. But such detailed work would carry us far

beyond the limits of a note, if not of an article. The general lines of inquiry are as follows :—

1. What is the trend of the Gospels, i. e., to what feelings, thoughts in their readers do they appeal? What is the purpose of the writers in presenting these writings to their fellow Christians? From this point of view, the Synoptic Gospels represent the *Evangelistic* spirit of the time; they are the *missionary* gospels; Luke, as later, is seen to reveal a somewhat more reflective, educative spirit (compare his preface). The church has grown in seriousness in passing from Mark to Luke. The Gospel of John, on the other hand, bears witness to an entirely different state of things. It is not evangelistic or missionary in the sense of the other Gospels. It represents the bloom of that reflective spirit which made its appearance in the third Synoptic. It is the representative of the *theological* and *devotional* spirit of the last age of the primitive church.

2. A careful study of the main outlines of each Gospel will serve to fasten the general conclusions as to the life of the Early Christians in the particular periods of the first century in which each appeared. The choice of incidents and teachings in each is a wonderful index of the minds appealed to, the thoughts of those addressed. The Gentile question,—how is it that it does not emerge in Matthew and Mark, but is visible on every page of Luke and has, however, gone out of sight in John?

3. The incident by incident, word by word study of each Gospel is the final stage in this inquiry. The Tübingen school of criticism made many mistakes in their investigations and went to outrageous extremes, but their principle was a good one in so far as they emphasized the personal element of authorship and the general tendencies of the time to which the Gospels appealed. They sought proofs of their positions in many minute points of detail which we may profitably use in a different way from that in which they employed them. It cannot be doubted that a very considerable amount of valuable material can thus be found which will throw light on the historical situations referred to. There is room for error, for extravagance, for an overfineness of observation which sees a whole chapter of history in a sentence, a world in a word. But there is also room for careful, cautious, detailed investigation, moving on scientific principles to assured results.

G.